

(editor's note: This paper was transcribed from a handwritten cursive copy with various difficulties. For a perfect rendition, the reader might wish to consult the original, itself a copy, in the volume entitled *Literary Club Papers I*, 1885 – 1886 Oct 3, '85 to May 29, '86) The original is very badly faded.

The South And Its Relations To Cincinnati

I propose this evening to give some observations upon the Southern States, – their progress during the last ten years, and some ideas upon their future, with reference to Cincinnati.

In the winter of 1871-2 I took my carpet-bag in hand and started for the Sunny South. My destination was Montgomery, Ala., where soon after my arrival I was thrown into immediate contact with the business men of that city.

The principal topic of conversation was Cotton, Cotton, Cotton, there was no escape from it except by broaching politics, but even this all absorbing topic to a Southern man was then at a discount. There had been a short crop (a total of less than 3,000,000 bales), and every body was in high glee. I soon found out that the actual cotton raised was not the cause of rejoicing because, as before mentioned the crop was a failure. It was “futures”, that is, speculative contracts on cotton.

Everybody had some; Judges, Lawyers, Doctors, wives and even children in arms. Prices continued to dance. The general opinion was that the world could not get along without the fleecy staple, and there would be a grand scramble for it at any price. All were Bulls, no Bears were to be heard of, when the quotations from New York came in, they were invariably a little higher.

Game dinners with “Piper Heidsick” were frequent. Parties were given by the wives and the daughters and young men had a good time generally. This good fortune lasted through the winter, and the citizens cleared a large amount of money. Next year however the “New Yorkers” as they are called there turned the tables completely and cleaned out the people; more money north than had ever been received at the south.

This section was probably cured of speculation by this disaster, and turned their attention to legitimate business. What is true of one section in a great measure applies to all the Southern States especially those bordering upon the Gulf of Mexico. These remarks are founded upon observations made in

Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi.

The soil and climate is about the same in all except that Mississippi has in the bottom lands of the great River a large area that is not likely to be worn out for a long period. Georgia has passed the lowest point in agriculture and is on the rebound; Alabama is still on the downward path in its farming methods.

Of course cotton is the principal production and means of support for 3/4 of the inhabitants. A resume of this crop might be said to include a history of the agriculture of this region. In general, the amount raised has constantly increased, and will continue to do so until the laws of commerce force the price to an absolutely prohibitory point.

When one talks with the planter about a diversity of crops and the raising of other articles, he reasons as follows: – Cotton always has a market and brings the cash; none of us have enough capital to farm with and we can, through our crop [. . .law] borrow money or get supplies upon the growing crop, and thus cultivate a much larger area than we otherwise could; besides, at the average price there is more value in less bulk than in any article we could cultivate. Our roads are bad, (in fact, the good wagon road is hard to find in the extreme South), and if we raised an excess of corn, the cost of getting it to the R. R. or river and to market would consume its worth.”

If you reason with them about the inevitable effect of one product upon the land and the danger of overproduction the planter answers: – we have plenty of new land to fall back on when our old fields are worn out and after our time why there is Texas for the children, and as long as we can borrow enough money to make a crop were not scared about our production.

One fact needs to be mentioned, and this is the use of commercial fertilizers has extended the area of cotton growth over the upland region and moved the northern line of production over a hundred and fifty miles further up in the past fifteen years. Georgia has poorer lands than either of the other states, but this fact, coupled with a certain Yankee energy and thrift has caused a better method of farming to prevail; they have found the secret of success is to raise their own food and stock, and to make cotton a surplus crop, which they stimulate largely with fertilizers. Alabama and Mississippi must follow this plan or continue to grow poorer every year. Their smoke-house is in the

west; their stock comes from Kentucky and Tennessee; their shoes from Massachusetts, clothing from Cincinnati and corn from Chicago. I have seen cotton up to the front door and not even a garden patch in sight. Late discoveries, both in Alabama and Mississippi point out a way to renew the fertility of their own fields which almost seems providential. I refer to the finding of very extensive marl beds all over the southern part of these two states. A trip through this section last summer has convinced me that this region will yet renew its own vigor by the use of these marls.

Turning from the agricultural interest to the mineral resources, we have every reason to be greatly encouraged at the developments made in the past decade.

When the charter of the South and North Ala. Railroad, now part of the Louisville and Nashville system was first asked for, a member of the legislature of Alabama spoke upon the impossibility of building a railroad through the mineral region, and said the country was so poor a buzzard could not fly across it and live. Today this section holds out the promise of a future that will put the cotton crop in shade as a source of wealth.

The geology of the three states, – roughly, – is about as follows: Northeast Alabama and Northern Georgia contains the older metamorphic formations, in which gold, tin, magnetic iron ore and zinc abound. Alabama has 4500 square miles of the great Appalachian coal fields, approaching within 200 miles of the Gulf; a small corner of Georgia cuts into the edge of this field but is of no great consequence in comparison with the area in Alabama. No coal occurs in Mississippi.

Starting in north-east Alabama and north-west Georgia to valleys running north-east and south-west one traversed by the Selma, Rome and Dalton division of the East Tennessee System, and the other by the Alabama Great Southern R. R. through Birmingham, Ala., contain the principal deposits of iron ore. The easterly one of the two has Brown Hematite; the other contains the same ore south of Birmingham and on its eastern and western rim a ridge of red Ferriferous (*sic*) iron ore. The Eastern valley now has 12 blast furnaces, all using charcoal for fuel.

Three of these were built either before or during the war, the balance since 1871. Western Valley only had to at the close of the war, both of which used charcoal. One is dismantled; the other is reconstructed and turned into a coke

furnace.

There are now ten furnaces in operation and one or two building. All in this valley use coke for fuel. There are, in the Chattanooga district six large furnaces using coke, and others in the vicinity. All told, the district now has 37 furnaces with the capacity, when in full blast of 560,000 tons of pig per year with a value of over \$7,000,000.

It must be borne in mind that all the coke furnaces with two exceptions are larger, modern constructions which make 5 times as much as the old-style. The giant strides in the metallurgy of iron in the past 10 years has brought about this result.

The rate of increase in furnaces is as follows:

	Coke	Charcoal	Total
1872	2	14	16
1873	4	18	22
1874	5	23	28
1875	9	21	30
1876	9	19	28
1877	9	19	28
1878	9	18	27
1879	12	19	31
1880	13	18	31
1882	13	15	28
1883	18	15	33
1884	19	18	37

The change from charcoal to coke is well shown in this table:

The production in	Coke	Charcoal	Total
1878	14469	26496	40965
1879	67998	36124	104122
1880	113695	45014	158709
1884	279047	69063	348110

In 7 years showing an increase of over 5 fold. The production by states is

	1880	1884
Alabama	77190	189664
Tennessee	70873	134597
Georgia	27321	42655

Mississippi makes no iron. Texas I believe has one furnace. There is no question that the natural resources of the South, in raw materials and their proximity to each other gives that section an advantage over the North; but this is in a measure counteracted by the cost of consumption. This industry will continue to grow, but I do not think it will work a revolution in the future – as some do. The cost of all the materials is bound to increase, and there is no likelihood that the other items entering into the cost of iron will be materially reduced. An average cost for the whole Southern District may be put at \$12.00 per ton.

I do not know of but one company in Alabama that has made a very large amount of money on pig iron manufacture, but the general gain from the investment of this capital has been very large.

The development of coal mining is intertwined with the progress of the pig iron industry. In 1870, Georgia, Alabama and Tennessee only produced 144,418 tons and even in 1872 Alabama's yield was not over 16,000 tons, but in 1884 the three states produced nearly 3,500,000 of tons.

The progress of coal-mining is not going to be limited by the pig iron industry in the future. Taking the Alabama coalfields as a center, there is no coal to be found East, West, or South, and a population in Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi and part of Louisiana and Texas are dependent on this field for a supply. The various kinds of Bituminous coals are all present, and the capacity is ample enough to meet all possible demands.

Copper, gold, tin, both copper and impyrites manganese and kaolin are all found in workable quantities in the South, and will play a larger part in the future than they have in the past.

Turning to the manufacturing industries, the South has already achieved success in making cotton goods of the coarser kinds; this industry is growing

fast. Woolen factories are doing fairly well. One at Wesson Miss., connected with a cotton factory deserving especial mention. There are a few jute factories for making bagging. Some nail works, two large, one at Birmingham Alabama employing 600 men. Fertilizer works are springing up in response to an ever-increased demand, and cotton-seed oil works are utilizing a vast quantity of cottonseed which heretofore was practically a waste product.

Within 10 years the lumber industry will be transferred from the north-west to the yellow pine belt of the South. The operations of Michigan are already buying large tracts of timber in anticipation of a change of base.

The railway system is by no means complete; when the older roads were planned, the only thing to carry was cotton. The roads avoided the rough and rugged hills in which the mineral wealth lies concealed, and now it is necessary to build branch lines to reach it. The change of gauge to the northern standard is underway and will, in another year be practically complete. The depression that all R. R. Property has staggered under the past four years has pressed heavily upon the southern roads; they have reached the turning-point, and I believe are about to see better times.

The rivers of the South have been sadly neglected. Those running to the Gulf, especially in Alabama will yet furnish cheap transportation for coal and iron to the sea. With the close of the reconstruction period, the Negro sank back into his natural position, and the white element woke up to meet the new ideas of life and progress then beginning. The black man is timid and social; he does not wish to mingle with the whites, and only asks for peace, and to be let alone.

They are earnestly striving for education, and old men may yet be seen studying the spelling book. The blacks are very fond of disputations. They even have literary societies at which debates on various abstruse questions are held. One subject, by way of example was as follows: if a peach-tree grows on de side of the road inside de fence, and a branch reaches over so de peaches fall in de road, whose fruit am it?

Their wants are few, and I can cheerfully testify that as laborers they are far ahead of any other nationality in the ease with which the get along with employers. They cannot do as much work in a day as a white laborer not native born, but, by simply keeping a slight excess of labor in hand, there is

no trouble to meet this failing.

The white inhabitants of the hill regions are lazy, shiftless, with no earthly ambition. A family will live on the product of eight or ten acres. Several times I have endeavored to ascertain how much money was required to support them outside of their crop; \$80.00 per year was all they could count up.

Turning from this picture to the planting region outside of the black belt, one is agreeably surprised at the high average of intelligence among the planters. The hope of the South is in this class.

Before the war the rich lands or Canebreak country also called the Black Belt, was the center of cotton cultivation. The plantations were large, and slaves simply swarmed upon them. The owners resided partly upon their plantations, and partly in the cities on the edge of this section. Macon and Columbus Georgia, Montgomery and Tuscaloosa in Alabama and Columbus Mississippi are the border towns. Now one can travel a whole day through this region without meeting a white man. Shiftless farming by the negroes as renters has begun to show its inevitable effect. The land is fast wearing out. I have been shown a field that had borne a crop of cotton for 55 years in succession without being fertilized. The dreary life surrounded with swamps of negroes is driving the intelligent whites to the towns and cities. This movement is gathering strength and it is one that will build up the towns rapidly and naturally bring about a diversity of pursuits, new wants, better houses and an improvement in the general condition of the people.

Emigration has not sought the South; white labor will not go there and become mere wage-workers until the Western prairies are filled out, and the immigrant can no longer become an owner of the soil by a few years of privation. The southern people do not encourage it either; they seem to fear that they would be pushed to the wall by the superior thrift and energy of the white emigrant. They cling to the black man and oppose by stringent laws any effort on their part to move to pastures new yet you can't talk with the older class of Southern planters a few minutes without you hear him "damn the nigger."

Education, on account of a mixed population has not kept pace with the time. I do not know of but two public libraries in the whole state of Alabama, and they are hardly worth mentioning. The public school system is gradually

being introduced, and is now receiving more attention than before.

The young white men show an earnest desire to procure a technical education; they want to learn practical things; but it is hard for them to find the way to do it at home. If one considers the degradation of labor brought about by generations of slavery, this desire shows that a new South is indeed born and will yet rise to wealth and power.

The health of the South, if census statistics are correct, is superior to the North; outside of the low country bordering the rivers I believe it is at least equal to the North, but from poor food and lack of care, the vitality and energy of the natives is depressed and sluggish. The hill region is remarkably healthy. Statistics show that the United States is the healthiest country in the world.

This is the region into which the city of Cincinnati at an enormous cost has thrust its Southern Railroad, and is now painfully surprised at the meager results so far obtained. I do not think, when the final balance is struck, it will show such a disparity as at present appears.

In the western states have arisen, since the R. R. was first started, but this has been brought about by immigration. The natural increase at the South, however, while very large, cannot keep pace with the steady stream from the old world flocking to the prairies beyond us. The burden is resting upon us and cannot be thrown off now, there only remains one thing to do, and that is, to make the best of it. I propose to point out a few lines in which the city might increase its commerce with the South, and aid its railroad as well as its business.

Of course the great staple of the South is cotton, yet this city plays a very small part in handling it. The completion of the Queen and Crescent built to the border of Texas gives the city a chance to come into direct competition with St. Louis. We must get some of this trade.

The manufacture of cotton goods, twine, and all the textile fabrics having cotton as a base, is almost entirely neglected here. It may be answered that the absence of water-power is the reason this branch has not been pushed. This excuse would do for ten years ago, but now it don't apply. Some of the great northern mills and southern too, have put in steam-power right alongside their water-power mills, hauling the fuel hundreds of miles.

Philadelphia is an example of what can be done after its commerce has departed. It is a hive of industry from its enormous number of small manufacturing interests.

We stand upon the threshold of supply and see a stream of cotton passing through to Massachusetts and even far-off Maine, and hardly make an effort to stop one single bit of it.

Another branch of this same business might find a home here. I refer to the manufacture of dye-stuffs for cotton goods. With the growth of cotton spinning in the South this branch will rise to considerable importance. The sale of southern pig iron is largely done from Cincinnati. No less than six large companies having their own agents right here, besides the old commission houses already in the trade. We now have secured this business and I think can hold it in the future.

The rolling-mill interest will be obliged to leave Cincinnati and seek those points where natural gas proves to be permanent. Stove foundries, machine-shops, and other uses of pig iron in which fuel plays a lesser part should continue to flourish and multiply here.

It will not be long before the interior lumber and timber center will move from Chicago, and a choice of a new location, (for the yellow pine interest at least,) is likely but to be between this city and Louisville. Unless we carefully watch it, the latter city will beat us. They can offer plenty of level land close to the river and railroads which will be hard to give to this business here, unless we vastly improve our Terminal facilities.

Nearly three fourths of all the sugar used in the United States is brought from abroad, principally from Cuba, and refined at Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, and then shipped to the west. It is no farther from the Gulf to Cincinnati than from the above-mentioned seaports to Cincinnati. Why can't we buy the raw material in Cuba, ship it to Pensacola, Mobile, and New Orleans, and bring it on our own railroad to Cincinnati and refine it at home.

Right here comes in, too, one of those commercial points that a business man perceives at once, and that is, that the Southern ports mentioned have plenty of raw material to send out, but seldom import anything. Alabama can't send her coal to Cuba and compete with Cardiff, Philadelphia, and

Baltimore, because the vessels could get no return freight. The whole aspect of affairs will change when importations begin to arrive at these ports; – the outward cargoes are already assured and eagerly waiting for a chance now denied them because they are too bulky and cheap to pay freight both ways.

I have seen in the part of Pensacola over a hundred vessels after lumber, and not a single one coming there with a cargo.

As the West Indies use over 3,000,000 tons of coal per annum, one can readily perceive the time is almost right for this change. I am quite sure the railroads would guarantee to bring freight from the Gulf to Cincinnati as cheap as the trunk lines will from the Atlantic seaboard. Only three days ago, while in conversation with one of the general freight agents of the Missouri Pacific R. R. at Kansas City, I was informed by him that his company had just landed at Kansas City 500 crates of crockery, 5000 boxes of tin, and 2000 bags of salt direct from Liverpool through the port of New Orleans for 15 cts per 100 pounds cheaper than the same material could be brought from New York to Kansas City. This is rather startling but is true because the steam-ships coming to New Orleans for cotton are glad to get this kind of freight instead of ballast, and will bring it at most any price.

Now, if our Railroads would make a bond to the United States, these goods could come to Cincinnati and duties could be paid here from the warehouse as we wished to use them or could sell them.

By helping themselves in the above lines of trade, Cincinnati could help their railroad and the South too, and I am sure the railroads and the South would heartily cooperate with our merchants to bring this result about. The subject is a fruitful one, and would be greatly enlarged upon, but I must refrain.

In conclusion, let me hope that any remarks will not be considered presumptuous, because it is my earnest desire to see my adopted home prosper, and rise to its proper pinnacle of greatness.

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